

IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER

Building an education; Madison High class teaches hands-on construction trade

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REXBURG -- It was a cold, windy morning, but it didn't matter.

"Working out on a cold day, that's real," said Stephen Meyers, Madison High School's industrial technology teacher.

And that's precisely how a handful of students in his building and construction class spent their day Friday -- at the Hidden Valley Subdivision, bundled in jackets and gloves, braving the weather to frame a house.

They put a framing wall in wrong -- the boys who hoisted it into place didn't like taking it down again. Mistakes happen, Meyers said. They're not experts yet.

"If we have to cut and redo, we have to cut and redo," he said.

The skeleton of a 3,630-square-foot home doesn't yet compare with the one the students have nearly completed next door. It's three stories, has seven bedrooms and a full-house surround sound system, and it was recently appraised at \$292,000.

The home they worked on Friday will have 11-foot ceilings and a theater.

"We go the nicer-home route so they can see the potential of what they can do," Meyers said. "Otherwise, who's going to show them the possibilities?"

The building and construction class began eight years and six homes ago. The houses, built with grant and loan money, are auctioned as the district's surplus property and sold at the appraised value.

"We've never had trouble selling," Meyers said of the homes, which are usually built within a school year.

The class offers students a chance to put down their textbooks and learn a trade firsthand, he said, adding that the construction field is booming. Employers have already approached him about training students interested in the industry, he said. He's helped three other schools start similar programs.

The class is helping junior Jessica Andersen decide whether she wants to be an architect, something she's considered for a long time.

Sophomore Brett Davis isn't sure what profession he will take up, but he enjoys the class. It's given him the skills needed to add on to a future home, he said, skills such as taking bids, estimating costs and the work itself.

Students do most of the work themselves. Electricians and plumbers are hired, but the students try to watch and learn from the professionals, Meyers said.

Some of the students go on to work in construction-related fields after taking the class, which acts as a feeder program for colleges, he said. One former student is now supervising the building of the Rexburg Temple, Meyers said, and others have overseen the construction of million-dollar homes.

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